2013-14 Report to the USC Academic Senate from the Committee on the Development and Implementation of University Policies

The Academic Senate’s Committee on Development and Implementation of University Policies (CDIUP) is charged to “monitor and review, on its own initiative or as requested by the Senate or the Executive Board, any University policy, especially those that materially affect the primary work of the faculty or its role in governance of the University.” The charge instructs the committee to “pay special regard to the manner in which relevant policies originated, their rationales and content, and their implementation” and specifies that “In-depth studies of particular areas of University process shall only be carried out at the direction of the Executive Board.”

During the 2013-14 Academic Year, CDIUP reviewed two policies referred by the Executive Board and one at its own initiative.

1. Faculty Governance

In October 2013, the President of the Faculty informed CDIUP that the Senate Executive Board requested that it consider the issue of full-time non-tenure track (NTT) faculty involvement in governance, and specifically, Senate options if such basic rights of all full time faculty (Academic Senate Constitution, Article I, Section 2) are not allowed within a faculty council. This request relates to the Engineering Faculty Council (EFC) where direct involvement of full-time NTT faculty in EFC governance (voting and/or holding office) currently is not allowed. The Executive Board requested specific action this past summer to correct this issue (see accompanying letter dated August 15, 2013). Deliberations continue within Viterbi to address the issue of having NTT faculty fully involved in governance and I am hopeful this will be achieved but it is possible that required action may not be obtained. The Executive Board would like CDIUP to review options available to the Senate for bringing this issue to a rapid and appropriate conclusion if needed.

CDIUP agreed that this is an important matter and was pleased to learn that President Gomer had already communicated to the Viterbi School the Senate’s determination that full compliance with this policy is necessary for all schools that wish to have a legitimate system of faculty governance, including participation in the Academic Senate.

On November 4, 2013, we informed President Gomer that CDIUP hoped that he and the other Senate leaders will be able not only to continue to support those members of the Engineering faculty who are trying to bring the school council into compliance with the governance rules but will also reach out to the administration...
of the school. By way of example, the reforms that occurred in the Keck School in 2011-12 were greatly aided by Dean Puliafito’s expressed willingness to engage with a properly reconstituted faculty council. We noted, however, that this is not an issue for CDIUP, since it involves the rules of the Senate rather than, strictly speaking, University policies. If the efforts underway do not bear fruit, it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Senate Rules Committee. (To the best of our knowledge, the matter was not referred to the Rules Committee.)

2. Non-Smoking Policy

At the same time, President Gomer informed CDIUP that the Senate Executive Board requested that it consider the issue of generating a no-smoking policy for the University. The Executive Board, the Committee on Faculty Environment, and the Work and Family Life Advisory Committee will also work on this issue. The Executive Board would like CDIUP to review options available to the Senate for developing appropriate recommendations to provide to the University for possible establishment of a no-smoking policy.

On November 4, CDIUP replied that since two other committees were already addressing this University policy and the Senate is on record as favoring the adoption of such a policy, there seemed to be no special role for our committee. The barrier to University adoption apparently lay not with the administration but with students—especially graduate students—who have expressed doubts about the wisdom of a smoke-free campus. Should the process then being undertaken by others arrive at a point where CDIUP’s help or advice were needed in formulating a policy, we expressed our willingness to assist, but it was our impression that the central administration is willing to create such a policy if indeed all constituencies can be brought on board. In March, the administration reported to the Senate on the new University policy on smoking on campus.

3. Sexual Assault of Students

During the Fall semester, the committee discussed recent press coverage and student comments regarding the treatment of students who report being sexually assaulted. The welfare of all of our students is of deep concern and interest to the faculty. We understand that the Provost’s office and the Student Affairs office are working on this issue. We support a full investigation of the allegations, especially those that maintain that the officials responsible for responding to student complaints or reports do so in a confusing or unhelpful fashion.

Having reviewed USC’s current policies on sexual assault (available on the University’s website), CDIUP found them to be clear in wording and comprehensive in coverage. This suggests that if student dissatisfaction has merit, the problems would appear to lie in implementation (or in students’ perception of the policies or staff practices). We recommended that the Executive Board convey to the Provost
the faculty’s support for a full investigation and satisfactory resolution of the student allegations. In addition, we recommended that, at the conclusion of the process, the faculty (as well as the rest of the University) be:

- informed of the process and outcome of the investigation into the allegations;
- reacquainted with the policy and procedures for assisting victims of sexual assaults; and
- notified about the resources available for students who experience or witness a sexual assault.

On March 14, 2014, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs distributed via email to all faculty, a letter from the Office of Equity and Diversity detailing “information about resources available to help students who have been faced with gender-based misconduct, including sexual assault.”

The committee invited further instructions from the Executive Board but received none.

The members of the committee thank the Senate for the opportunity we were afforded to be of service.

Respectfully,

Alexander M. Capron  
Co-Chair

Ann Crigler  
Co-Chair

April 4, 2014